

School for Housewives

by Marion Harland

Christmas Fare in Many Lands



Washing Butter for Scotch Short Bread.

A Pretty Mexican Christmas Custom



Slicing Oranges for Dulce de Naranja.

DO YOU ever realize how much of the good cheer of Christmas is dependent on cookery? Every land-indeed, almost every family—has its own special dainties of the season, the omission of which would mean the loss of half the Christmas spirit.

From remote antiquity has come to us the habit of Christmas feasting; indeed, the Christmas cakes are said to typify a direct connection between the adoration of the God of Light and the exaltation of his power on earth in the birth and the death.

In many of their Christmas customs the peasantry of Europe is all unwittingly following the tradition of its own ancestry. Thus, little do the people of Central France, who each year make small crescent-shaped "gateaux de Noël," called "corniches," to give the poor, realize that the odd shape of these cakes, resembling a bullock's horns, is a heritage of their heathen forefathers.

Equally ignorant are the Scandinavians, who bake their Christmas cakes in the shape of a pig, and feast on roast pork for their Christmas dinner. They do not think that they are commemorating the sacrificial boar whose life was offered up each Yuletide.

Strange Superstitions.

The superstitions which so frequently cling around Christmas customs are not confined to saving scraps of the Yule log to ward off thunderstorms. A certain French loaf cake baked by some of the old-time farmers on Christmas Eve, so far from being indigestible, is thought to have healing powers, and is saved all through the year to give to the sick of the family.

Then there is a Scandinavian cake made from the flour of the last sheaf of corn harvested, a piece of which is always kept until spring, and given to the plowman for good luck in his crops.

The Christmas spirit is, doubtless, the same the world over, though it is manifested in some very curious fads. While the Russian and the Scandinavian always feast on Christmas Day on roast sucking pig, stuffed with buckwheat or chestnuts, the German regales himself on a fat goose, or, if he be from the Southern Rhine, on the "carpen blau," or blue carp. This is cut in small pieces, and stewed in a red wine sauce, flavored with salt, pepper, a small onion, a bay leaf or two, slices of lemon, a large lump of butter, and breadcrumbs. Just before serving, the red blood of the carp and a lump of sugar are added.

While the Anglo-Saxon is eating his cap, juicy turkey, the people of Panama are reveling in sancocho, a special Christmas stew of beef, chicken, pork, potatoes, plantains, tomatoes, onions and peppers, cooked into a thick brown gravy, and the Neapolitan is feasting on his boiled in oil.

The Christmas cake is equally varied, though it has a striking similarity in almost most of it is dark, rich, and plummy.

Holland, Amsterdam especially, indulges in quantities of St. Nicholas cake, a crisp brown gingerbread—made in the form of men and women. This is called "vrigers," or sweethearts, because each person gets a cake of the opposite sex. The Dutch also have an

other Christmas cake, scarcely so inviting. It is called "tast-tast," or "tough-tough," from its lack of tenderness. This cake, fortunately, has the happy faculty of mellowing with age.

After all, it is to Germany one must go for the real Christmas spirit in cookery, as in everything else. For weeks before hand the housewife and all her flock are making pleasing preparations for the great day. Indeed, if she be especially thrifty, she has been paying to the baker throughout the year a small weekly "stolle" tax, in order to get not only stolle, but all her cakes free at Christmas.

While the confectioner bakes most of the German cakes, especially the huge baumkuchen, numbers are also prepared at home.

Baumkuchen, a white cake, with streaks of fawn color running through it, is typically German. It is at least three feet high and hollow clear through the center. The top is cut in points like a turret and iced with a white icing, while all over the glazed surface of the sides are knobs daubed with icing. Such a cake naturally requires to be baked in a special mould.

The baking of the springerle, a white cake, with raisins, causes quite a jubilation. The entire family gathers round the kitchen table and mould the dough into round little wooden forms of flowers and figures; the forms—which, by the way, may be bought in this country—are removed and the cakes baked on iron sheets.

Aix-la-Chapelle is noted for its honey-kuchen (honey cakes). A delicious German recipe for this is to heat three-quarters of a pound of honey with three-quarters of a pound of sugar. Then add the pounded paste of seven ounces of sweet and 1½ ounces of bitter almonds, 3½ ounces of candied lemon peel, 1 ounce each of cloves and cinnamon, the grated rind of a lemon, 1-3 ounce of soda, and half cup of rose-water. After this is well mixed, add about 1½ pounds of flour to make a firm dough that can be well kneaded. When cold, roll out, stick cherries over it, and bake in a moderate oven.

No German family would be without stollen at Christmas, a very rich cake raised with yeast, not without their delicious candy marzipan. Many of the cakes and candies are hung on the Christmas tree, as well as barley sugar cakes, apples and gilded nuts. Little cakes, leaved with different colored sugar, can be bought especially for the decoration. These are left on the tree for two weeks or until the "baumplundern" (robbing the tree), when they are taken down with special ceremonies and given to the children of the poor. Most of the German cakes keep a long time.

Christmas in England means equally good things to eat, though possibly not so varied. Plum puddings, fruit cakes, and mince pie are never wanting, and delightfully rich and "plummy" are they all.

An English Ceremony.

The stirring of the plum pudding is made a special ceremony. The night before Christmas, or sometimes a week earlier, the family all gather round a holly-decked dining table. Then, as the butter brings in a huge bowl filled with the pudding batter, the father of the household rises, and, pouring in a glass

of brandy, stirs it with a long spoon, wishing good luck, good cheer, and good health to all, and to the King as well. He is followed, in turn, by each member of the family, down to the tiniest baby, and by the servants according to rank, each stirring in his glass of brandy, or, if one be a teetotaler, milk is sometimes substituted. Even the wee pet dog must be allowed to stir.

When that blazing plum pudding is brought in at dinner the next day, one must be sure to get a piece of the flame for good luck.

One must also be very sure they have not tasted mince pie that season before they get a tart from the Christmas dinner, for that would be very bad luck, indeed.

After dessert very probably there will be snap-dragon, with the guests all pulling raisins out of blazing brandy. When they have eaten all they wish, salt is poured on the dish, and very weird does every one look in the blue light.

France does not pay as much attention to Christmas as do many other countries. New Year is her great day for feasting. Therefore, there is very little distinctive fare, beyond the few cakes already mentioned and some candy in odd forms and figures. No foreigners, however, eat candy as do the Americans, even at the holiday season.

The Italian Christmas is largely religious, but there is a varied interest in the Christmas fare. We find the Neapolitan and others of southern Italy going mad over "il capitone," the eel, reeking with garlic and oil, that every one must eat on Christmas Day. All Christmas Eve the markets are full of excited people auctioning this day's catch of the season, which brings many times its regular price; indeed, the very poor often beggar themselves in their determination to buy an eel.

"Piazza," a pastry filled with fruit and eggs, is another favorite Christmas dish.

In north Italy we find the people always eating Agnolotti (or Ravioli) on this day.

The giving of presents is an imported custom, and instead of a Christmas tree the wealthier people have a dark corner, adorned to represent a manger and the Nativity. This is called "il presepio," and is common all over Italy. The churches have it for the poorer classes.

Gala Times in Mexico.

Christmas in Mexico is a gala time, indeed; the feasting and present-giving lasts for nine nights. During Posadas—the feast previous to Christmas ("Noche Buena")—nine families club together, each taking a night. Even the children are brought to these feasts, where there are refreshments according to one's means.

All gather in the parlor, and after singing and telling of the rosaries the hostess brings into the room a great basket filled with bananas, fruit, peaches, and "conites," the national candy of little sugared balls in many colors. These are thrown to the small children, to their intense delight.

Later, the older boys and young men blindfold the girls, give them a big stick and take them out to the courtyard, in the center of which hangs a big pot decorated as a bull or man and filled, as was the basket, with assorted good things. Each girl in turn, after being turned till she loses her bearings, is given a try at the pot with her stick. When a girl finally breaks the pot, such a mad scramble ensues, after which the distribution of presents on trays takes place.

For nine succeeding nights this is repeated until Christmas Eve, when a big dinner is given at midnight, to which all contribute. At this meal is served soup, turkey, vegetables and "Plumbe," a kind of fruit salad, of oranges, bananas and chicken marinated in French dressing. The dessert is usually



Stirring the Blessing in English Pudding

ices in fancy molds, followed by much fun over nuts and raisins.

In Peru, Panama and other South American countries they also have an eight days' celebration at Christmas. The young girls, dressed all in white, with flowers in their hair, go into the piazza each night and dance in procession. This is followed by a feast.

Always at this season the people eat Buconella, a very light egg fritter, in the shape of a ring and fried in lard. These are sold everywhere on the streets.

They also have "Toronada alcañito," a sort of nougat, and many delicious "dulces," as cakes and candy are called. One of the favorites is called "Dulce de Naranja." Take four large, thick-skinned navel oranges and cut them in round slices about a quarter of an inch thick, skin all, and boil with one quart of water and a pound of sugar until the skin is tender. This should make a thick syrup like marmalade. If the oranges get too soft, take them out and pour the syrup over them.

Even Calvinistic Scotland has certain Christmas dishes, the chief being an extra rich shortcake, made of two pounds of flour, one-half pound of sugar, one pound of butter and one ounce candied peel. After washing the salt from the butter, rub it to a cream with the sugar, add the flour, which has been warmed, and mix carefully with a wooden spoon. Roll with a rolling pin or knead well with the hands. Press into tins, add comfits or sugared caraway seeds and the cinnamon, and bake in a moderate oven until crisp and brown, about three-quarters of an hour.

In far-away Calcutta they also have the Christmas spirit, and the natives make innumerable little cakes and present them to the English Sahibs. Sometimes these cakes are received by the score as offerings from the tradespeople and servants—though "backsheesh," as it is said, is usually expected in return.

The Housemothers' Exchange.

I HAVE invented a dessert. We had it for dinner yesterday for the first time. It was unanimously pronounced "very good," and a motion was made by my "John," and carried by acclamation, that it be dubbed (with your permission, of course), "Marion Harland Compote."

I enclose the recipe. If you like it, will you kindly signify as much and give my "creation" a place in the Exchange? M. B. (New York city).

Said an expressman to me last winter, when he had to see me in person to get my signature to a registered parcel:

"Excuse me, madam, for speaking so plainly, but I am honored by being allowed to meet you face to face. You may not know it, but you are a distinguished woman. Why, they've got your name on to a coffee pot! I sent it into a window!"

When I reported the speech to my "John," he said, with commendable gravity: "Now, that is FAME!"

With equal gravity and more real gratification, I take up the words in my acknowledgment to my stranger friend and flatterer.

"This is FAME!" For be it known that my namesake compote has been made and eaten and praised by my own household and has, forthwith, taken rank among our favorite sweets. It is undeniably delicious and an honor to the inventor.

That others may judge "if what I say be true," I give the recipe in detail.

Marion Harland Compote.

Core, without paring, large sweet apples. Pound sweets and Talman sweets are fine for the purpose. Have ready a cupful of nut meats—English walnuts or pecans are best—pounded or ground fine. We put ours through the meat-chopper. Mix with them three tablespoonfuls of fine sugar to a cupful of the ground nuts. Fill the hollows left by the extracted cores with the mixture—full! Set the apples in a bakeshed; sprinkle three more spoonfuls of sugar over and about them; pour in enough cold water to come half way up to the top of each apple, cover closely and bake one hour, or until a knitting needle will pierce the apples easily. They must be tender all through. Let them get cold in the dish with their syrup around them without removing the cover, and set on ice or in a very cold place until you are ready to serve the compote. Then heap whipped cream upon the apples.

The syrup will be as brown as caramel, and the apples will be exquisitely flavored by the nuts. The combination with the whipped cream brings the compote to perfection.

Is it a marvel that I should be elated by the honor of having my humble name linked with this "rare," if not "radiant" creation?

SELECTING THE PRESENT

New book for 1906 is the most beautiful book we ever issued. Pictures in natural colors of 97 presents for the users of Arbuckle's ARIOSIA Coffee. Will be sent free to any one who writes for it.

Do you realize what a great business this Arbuckle's ARIOSIA Coffee is? As many as 30,000 letters for presents are received here in a day. In a year we despatched four million individual presents to our customers—presents that brought letters of thanks and appreciation in return.

Here is one from Mrs. De Jamette:

"I appreciate highly the beautiful presents sent me from you from time to time and will say that your coffee is the leading brand on the market*** the purest, best and healthiest coffee ever made. I have been a user of it for 25 years and will want it as long as life lasts. The coffee is worth three times its present market value."

Millions of persons in every part of the country drink no other Coffee, and swell the sales of Arbuckle's ARIOSIA until they exceed the combined sales of all the other packaged coffees.

Arbuckle's ARIOSIA is the best Coffee for you, saves your money, and gives you presents besides. Speak softly but plainly to your grocer man if he tries to sell you bulk coffee. Tell him you know.

If your grocer won't supply, write to ARBUCKLE BROS., N. Y. City.